

Amendments to the Drawings:

The attached sheet of drawings includes changes to the following:

Figure 2, previously omitted elements 72 and 74 have been added.

Figure 3, previously omitted element 48 has been added. Element 60 has been changed to 40. Lead line has been added to element 64 and extra lead line omitted.

Figure 7, previously omitted elements 48, 72, 74 and 62 have been added.

Figure 8, previously omitted element 62 has been added.

Figure 16, previously omitted element 76 has been added.

Figure 17, previously omitted element 62 has been added.

Figure 18, previously omitted elements 72, 74 and 62 have been added.

Figure 23, element 120 has been changed to 92.

Figure 26, element 28 has been changed to 78.

Attachment:

Replacement Sheet

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

The Office Action mailed June 10, 2005 has been received and the Examiner's comments carefully reviewed. Previously non-elected claims 1-12 and 17-19 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. The Applicant respectfully reserves the right to pursue these claims in future applications. Independent claims 13 and 20 have been amended as supported by, for example, Figures 22, 24, and 25 of the application and the related description on page 11, lines 1-15 of the current specification. Dependent claim 21 has been amended to depend from claim 20 instead of from claim 19. This amendment is editorial in nature. New independent claim 22 and new dependent claims 23-27 that depend from claim 22 have been added. The Applicant respectfully submits that the newly added claims 22-27 are properly placed in the elected Group III drawn to a cable connector as indicated in the Restriction Requirement mailed on March 14, 2005. No new matter has been added. Claims 1-27 are currently pending.

Support in Specification for New Claims

New claims 22-24 and 27 are supported by, for example, Figs. 7, 15, 16, and 22-25 of the application and the related description on page 11, lines 9-12 and lines 26-29 of the current specification.

New claim 25 is supported by, for example, Figs. 7, 16, and 24 of the application and the related description on page 11, lines 5-6 of the current specification.

New claim 26 is supported by, for example, Fig. 28 of the application and the related description on page 12, lines 3-14 of the current specification.

Drawings

In the Office Action, the drawings have been objected to as failing to comply with 37 CFR 1.84(p)(5) because they do not include the following reference signs mentioned in the description: the outer sleeve 48 recited on page 7, line 12. The drawings have been corrected accordingly as seen in the Amendments to the Drawings section of this paper. In addition to the inclusion of the reference numeral 48 in the Figures, the drawings also include other changes as indicated in the Amendments to the Drawings section of this paper. No new matter has been added. All of the amendments to the drawings are editorial in nature and have been included to

make the formal drawings filed on March 9, 2004 consistent with the originally filed informal drawings.

Specification

In the Office Action, the disclosure has been objected to because of two informalities: 1) On page 7, line 6, the reference numeral 58 is assigned to "Gripping surface 58," but on page 8, line 18, reference numeral 58 is assigned to "finger grooves 58." 2) On page 8, line 14 and page 9, line 22, "cable end 62" should be "cable end 60." The specification has been corrected accordingly as seen in the Amendments to the Specification section of this paper. No new matter has been added.

Claim Objections

The Office Action includes an objection to claim 1 and states that the word "first" should be inserted in front of "circumferential mating lip" recited in line 11 of claim 1 because line 16 recites "a second circumferential lip." Applicant assumes that the Examiner's objection is in reference to claim 13, and not to claim 1. Claim 13 has been amended accordingly for clarification purposes as seen in the Amendments to the Claims section of this paper. No new matter has been added.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

In the Office Action, claim 13 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph, as failing to comply with the enablement requirement. The Office Action states that the last paragraph of claim 13 recites that the first endcap includes a second circumferential lip adapted to mate with and form a junction with a second protective boot. The Examiner's understanding of the present invention is that the second circumferential lip of the first endcap mates with a circumferential lip of the second protective boot. In addition, lines 11 and 12 recite that the lips of the first end of the first endcap and the first boot mate. Therefore, clarification is requested as to whether the second boot includes a circumferential lip to mate with the second circumferential lip of the second end of the first endcap. As seen in the Amendments to the Claims section of this paper, minor revisions have been made to claim 13 for clarification purposes per the Examiner's request. No new matter has been added.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

In the Office Action, claims 13-16, 20 and 21 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Wood (US 5,605,468) in view of Fussell (US 5,199,893) and Sopotnick et al. (US 6,065,981).

Independent claims 13, as amended, recites, among other things, a cable connector assembly comprising a first cable connector with a mating end and a cable extending away from the connector opposite the mating end; a first protective boot with a circumferential mating lip at a connector opening, the first protective boot including an interior space for receiving the first cable connector and a cable end opposite the connector opening, wherein the first connector is positioned within the interior space of the first boot with the mating end adjacent the connector opening and wherein the cable extends through the cable end, the cable end being adapted to fit closely about the cable; and a first endcap with a first end positioned about the mating end of the first connector, the first endcap including an inner bulkhead cooperating with the first boot to cover the mating end of the first connector, the first end of the first endcap including a first circumferential mating lip, the lips of the first end of the first endcap and the first boot mating to form a junction adjacent the mating end of the first connector, the first endcap also including a second end adapted to fit about a second cable connector which includes a mating end adapted to physically and electrically mate with the mating end of the first connector, the second end of the first endcap including a second circumferential lip adapted to mate with and form a junction with a circumferential lip of a second protective boot positioned about the second connector.

Unlike the invention of claim 13, Wood fails to disclose or suggest an endcap that has an inner bulkhead cooperating with a boot to cover the mating end of a connector. The elastomeric sleeve seal 16 in Wood has a central bore that extends all the way through the sleeve seal 16. The sleeve seal 16 in Wood is designed to seal the external peripheral surface of the boot and lacks the inner bulkhead that covers the mating end of the connector, as featured in claim 13.

Fussell fails to remedy the deficiencies of Wood stated above with respect to claim 13. Fussell fails to disclose or suggest an endcap that has a first end adapted to mate with a boot of a first connector and a second end adapted to mate with a boot of a second connector wherein the endcap includes an inner bulkhead that covers the mating end of the first connector.

Sopotnick et al. also fails to remedy the deficiencies of Wood stated above with respect to claim 13. Sopotnick discloses a cap that is used to cover the terminal end of a power cord. Although the cap in Sopotnick includes an end wall 4 that is used to cover the terminating end of a power cord, the cap in Sopotnick does not have a first end that is adapted to mate with a boot of a first connector and a second end that is adapted to mate with a boot of a second connector. Furthermore, there is no suggestion or motivation in Sopotnick to modify its endcap to include these features.

For at least the reasons stated above, independent claim 13 and dependent claims 14-16 are patentable over Wood in view of Fussell and Sopotnick et al.

Independent claim 20 is a method claim featuring a dual ended endcap that has one end adapted to cover the mating end of a connector of a first gender and another end adapted to cover the mating end of a connector of a second gender, wherein the endcap includes an inner bulkhead for covering the mating end of the connector.

As stated above, Wood fails to disclose or suggest an endcap that has an inner bulkhead for covering the mating end of a connector. And as discussed above, neither Fussell nor Sopotnick et al., either alone or taken in a reasonable combination with each other, remedies the deficiencies of Wood with respect to the endcap featured in claim 20.

For at least the reasons stated above, independent claim 20 and dependent claim 21 are patentable over Wood in view of Fussell and Sopotnick et al.

The Applicant respectfully requests the withdrawal of this rejection.

Patentability of New Claims

Regarding claim 22, none of the prior art of record, either alone or taken in a reasonable combination with others, discloses or suggests a cable connector assembly having a first cable connector with a mating end and a cable extending away from the connector opposite the mating end and a first protective boot with a connector opening, a cable end opposite the connector opening, and an interior space for receiving the first cable connector, wherein the first cable connector is positioned within the interior space of the first boot with the mating end adjacent the connector opening and the cable extends through the cable end, the cable connector assembly also including a first endcap with a first end positioned about the mating end of the first

connector, the first end of the first endcap mating with the first protective boot to cover the mating end of the first cable connector, the first end of the first endcap also providing a friction fit with the mating end of the first cable connector.

Thus, claim 22, and claims 23-27, which depend from claim 22, are believed to be in condition for immediate allowance and notification to that effect is respectfully requested.

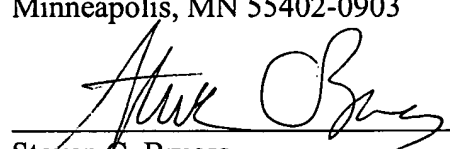
The Applicant respectfully requests that a timely Notice of Allowance be issued in this case. If the Examiner believes a telephone conference would advance the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at 612-332-5300.

Respectfully submitted,

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